

9. School Safety Survey: Policies, Programs, and Practices

The *School Safety Survey: Policies, Programs, and Practices* was mailed out to a random and confidential sample of 317 Arizona public schools in November 2000. Completed surveys were received from 300 schools (95% return rate) by March 2001. The data from the survey was input and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

The results from the survey have been summarized in this section. Frequency results from the survey have been presented by school characteristics, based on the national study, in seventeen tables. The questions are listed in columns and school characteristics are listed in rows, and all the cells are populated with the frequencies. The school characteristics that have been included for tabulation are as follows.

1. School level

Elementary

Middle

High

2. Enrollment size

Less than 300

300 to 499

500 to 999

1,000 or more

3. Crime level in school area

High

Moderate

Low

Mixed

Don't know

4. Percent minorities

0 to 5%

6 to 20%

21 to 50%

More than 50%

5. Free/reduced lunch

0 to 20%

21 to 50%

More than 50%

6. Level of safety in school

Very safe

Safe

Unsafe

Very unsafe

Don't know

7. Student/ teacher ratio

Less than 12

12 to 16

More than 16

8. Classroom changes

0 to 3 changes

4 to 6 changes

More than 6 changes

It becomes evident from the seventeen tables that almost all the public schools in Arizona have basic policies, programs and practices in place to maintain safe school environments.

A good majority of the schools, irrespective of school characteristics, have some method of monitoring access to campus as a safety mechanism, viz., visitor sign-ins, controlling access to building, etc. An equally good number of schools have zero tolerance policies for various issues like violence, fighting, weapons, firearms, and substance abuse. A relatively smaller number of schools seem to monitor their students through dress codes, IDs, random checks, and metal detectors.

Most of the schools have a plan for crisis. Some of the other programs that most schools have pertain to violence prevention and reduction like prevention curriculums, behavior modification, counseling, recreation, peer mediation, and hotlines.

A sufficiently large number of schools have policies such as training in classroom management for teachers, reviewing of school-wide discipline practices, and using regularly paid law-enforcement to reduce or prevent violence. However, only a small portion of school have policies pertaining to faculty training, reorganization of grades and/ or schedules, and environmental modifications as means to reduce or prevent violence.

Many schools also seem to involve parents in the process of school safety through mechanisms like parental input on policies and provision of technical assistance.

A good majority of the schools seem to have School Resource Officers and many are also of the opinion that their officers are involved in non-law related activities in school. In comparison not many schools seem to have Probationary Officers.

Unfortunately, not many schools seem to train teachers in recognizing early warning signs. And the schools that do seem to have a policy in place tend to average very few hours of training.

While a good majority of the respondents did not perceive many factors limiting the schools efforts in reducing or preventing crime, there were a sufficient number of schools who did consider limitations due to lack of teacher training in classroom management, alternative programs for disruptive students, parental support, and time.

It becomes evident from the seventeen tables that Arizona public schools are concerned with issues of safety and have various policies, programs, and practices in place to address the same. It is essential for schools to evaluate their safety efforts continually and take proactive steps as dictated by their local needs.

Data will be gathered on incidents of violence during Phase II (2001-02) of this study. This will allow for interesting cross analysis of data pertaining to policies and incidents.

*Note that this survey was adapted from the **School Survey On Crime and Safety (SSOCS)**, a national survey from the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education. Adapting the national survey will allow for meaningful comparisons between Arizona and national results.*

Their results will be available in February 2002 at www.nces.ed.gov/surveys/ssocs/main.